

## Moreno on board as museum director since its opening

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William Moreno has been executive director of the Claremont Museum of Art since it opened in the renovated Packing House.

In addition to its permanent collection, the museum has hosted an exhibit featuring work by local painter Karl Benjamin and an exhibit featuring regional work from various artists.

Its current exhibit on women in the East L.A. punk scene, called "Vexing," is the biggest departure yet from its previous exhibits.

Question: The museum has been open for a little bit more than a year now. How would you characterize the response so far from the community?

Answer: Enthusiastic. We had our largest Family Art Day ever a few weeks ago - over 140 people. Our recent exhibition opening for "Vexing" attracted over 800 people and general attendance numbers continue to move upward.

Q: How many members does the museum have now?

A: Over 600. And I might add that has been accomplished without the benefit of a huge advertising budget.

Q: Where did the idea come from to host the "Vexing" exhibit on women in the East L.A. punk scene?

A: We wanted to organize an exhibition of unexplored, regional history that would engage a younger, diverse demographic - and it certainly has. We also wanted to be in dialog with LACMA's "Phantom Sightings" exhibition. The museum's great strength is its ability to be experimental and forward thinking. We've been approached about the possibility of traveling the "Vexing" show - that's new territory and exciting for us.

Q: I saw on the museum's Web site that Go Betty Go and Sirens are going to be performing live at the museum in August. Are you considering making live musical performances a regular part of the museum?

A: Absolutely. Our overarching idea is to incorporate a multidisciplinary approach to our exhibitions and programs: music, poetry, spoken-word and performance.

Q: What are some of the more memorable exhibits the museum has hosted since it opened?

A: The "Vexing" opening rocked. People from all

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over Southern California came out to see the exhibit and music performances. It was a tremendous mix of people - that, to me, is one measure of an exhibition's success. Each of the exhibitions we've organized has been successful in its own way - we're still young with enormous potential.

**Q:** What is the museum going to do with that new permanent outdoor space on the east side of the Packing House?

**A:** It's evolving and not permanent, but the intention is to install murals or other public art projects on the "Art Wall," as it's officially known. We'd like the community to have access to the museum beyond our walls and in a more informal way.

**Q:** What do you think the Claremont Village community can do to make the First Friday concept take off like Second Saturday has in Pomona?

**A:** The two events have very different dynamics and they're not comparable. I think the Claremont Art Walk has been growing over the past few months and the city recently initiated a Friday Nights Live music event. Having more contemporary galleries in general and emerging artists in the Art Walk would attract collectors and energy. A new contemporary gallery just opened in the Packing House and I'm encouraged - but we need more.

**Q:** How do you think the Claremont Museum of Art fits into the regional art scene?

**A:** Museums are, in many ways, community anchors and gathering places, so I think we serve many purposes. We believe local art history is an important premise to build on and it provides a link to the present. Presenting challenging, contemporary exhibitions from the region and around the world is key to our mission and success.

**Q:** How did you get involved in the art world?

**A:** My father was an artist and a graduate of Pasadena's Art Center - so I grew up with art. I was a commercial gallery director and then moved over to museum work.

**Q:** If you hadn't become involved in arts, what would you have liked to do instead?

**A:** I enjoy writing - so perhaps a screen or fiction writer. I can't get away from the arts.

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